


In Memory of
Lillian Massey Treble





The Philanthropic Life Service
of
Lillian Massey Treble

*An Address by Rev. Chancellor Bowles
given in Metropolitan Church, Toronto,
at the Memorial Service held on
November Twenty-first,
Nineteen-fifteen*



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/philanthropiclif00bowl>

The Philanthropic Life Service of

Lillian Massey Treble

IT is mine this morning to briefly state the work of educational and religious philanthropy accomplished by the late Lillian Massey Treble. Any one acquainted with the one whose memory is before us in this service will know how fitting in every way it is that here in this church there should be told this story of high service rendered to Church and State by one of its members now with God. Not for the public praise of this worker—although that were right and proper—but for the inspiration derived from so noble an example should these deeds be spoken of to-day. Moreover, making doubly fitting this act is the fact that the springs of this life were the motives, the deep human and Divine motives of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. But for the teaching of Jesus Christ and the constraint of His love and the sense of indebtedness to Him I do not think this life would

have spent itself in such devoted and unselfish service to the common good. Mrs. Treble's earliest life was lived in the atmosphere of personal piety, after, as we say in these days, the old-fashioned Methodist type. The strong character of her father, Hart A. Massey, the gracious and beautiful personality of her mother, so well remembered by all who knew her, each in its own way made the home religious in its outlook and spirit. In that home the Church and its interests were matters of first rank. There is a worldly life and there is a religious life, and the members of this home, as of countless Methodist homes in this land, entered life with the distinctly religious view and motive.

In addition to this, Mrs. Treble's life was forwarded in philanthropic directions by the ministry of service upon which her father had entered in the last years of his very active career. Perhaps even more was this bent given to her life by the noble bequests contained in his will—a will which, judged from the social standpoint, was the finest disposal of a large estate ever made by any Canadian citizen. That will, as is well known, after

making many generous specific bequests, made Lillian Massey, the daughter, equally with Walter Massey and Chester Massey, her two brothers, trustee in the administration of a very large inheritance. And so it was that in obedience to the religious impulses of her own life and following the lines of action laid down in her father's last will and testament, Mrs. Treble began the life work which she continued until strength failed and she entered into rest.

Mrs. Treble found her first work not afar off nor in any startling or strange manner. It lay ready to her hand, and she took it up. The Mission now so widely known as the Fred Victor Mission was seeking by direct evangelistic ministry the poorest and the most helpless men, especially the victims of drunkenness. The Mission had been presented by her father with a very valuable building, and Mrs. Treble seems to have taken on herself the furnishing and perfecting of the building in all its appointments. It became in some sense her peculiar interest and care. For years she watched its development. It proved to be a most vigorous and ever-expanding enter-

prise. Not a detail of furniture or equipment down to the minutest need was overlooked. Largely at her suggestion and under her leadership changes were made and the Mission grew into a highly organized institution with many different activities. What the Mission might have become without Mrs. Treble's fostering care one cannot say, but as it stands to-day it may be regarded as an expression of the first use of her wealth, her purpose being to develop to highest efficiency a religious enterprise in which she saw large possibilities.

Work well done rewards the worker, and Fred Victor Mission furnished Mrs. Treble her education in the art—the very difficult art—of public philanthropy. A good school it proved. She herself was a teachable student, quick to learn, and her ideas of what might be done for the good of the community developed and enlarged in two directions.

First, it became evident that the ministries of the Mission must reach out and touch the homes. To do just this sort of work the order of deaconesses was being instituted. Already some of the greater missions of Methodism in

the United States and in England were making splendid uses of the services of consecrated and trained young women. Fred Victor Mission soon saw the need for such workers, and was, I believe, the first, certainly one of the first, institutions to employ them. Mrs. Treble was deeply interested in the training of these young women, seeing the need for specially trained and professionally educated leaders. That we have to-day in our city on St. Clair Avenue a costly and commodious building, a thoroughly equipped and suitable training school for deaconesses, is in no small measure due to her interest—an interest manifested not more in gifts of money than in the higher gifts of thought and care, continual planning and critical oversight.

Great institutions of this sort do not spring up autonomously, neither are they created by gifts of money alone. They all demand careful judgment, painstaking oversight, consultation and co-operative work, and above all the driving force of an earnest, strong personality to compel enterprise and insure achievement. Few except the circle of immediate workers know how largely Mrs. Treble gave of these

things along with the gifts of wealth. They can testify to the abundance of her labors.

The second direction given to Mrs. Treble's thoughts was that which ultimately led to the founding of the Lillian Massey School of Household Science. This will remain as her greatest undertaking and most lasting public memorial. Mrs. Treble was at heart a home-loving woman. She cared nothing for publicity save as far as possible to avoid it. To preside over boards and committees, to be the president of large associations, or to take a place on the public platform, excellent and necessary as these functions are, were not according to her tastes or desires, perhaps not according to the talents given her. She believed above all things in the dignity and profound social significance of the home, and in this faith the work of the mission confirmed her. What was needed was not a Sunday school alone for the girls, but such teaching and practical training as would make them useful in the home and help make the home more fully minister to all needs, physical, moral and æsthetic. So the work was begun in a very small way by the establishment of

the Kitchen Garden in the Mission. Here the younger girls were taught the simplest rudiments of the great lore of housekeeping. For this, too, like, indeed, all other departments of life, has its store of knowledge and wisdom. The work grew. Believing it should be undertaken in a higher and larger manner, and reach beyond the circles in which the Mission was then working, Mrs Treble purchased a lot and doubled the capacity of the building. Large and commodious rooms were set apart for what was then called Domestic Science. Mrs. Treble travelled through many cities of the United States and studied at first hand the work being done in different schools under various auspices. She purchased the best furniture and finest apparatus she could find to make successful the new departure in the Mission. Success came from the beginning. Young women from all parts of the city sought its advantages. It received the commendation of distinguished educational leaders. Premier Ross and the Hon. Mr. Harcourt, Minister of Education, gave it the prestige of their commendation and of a relationship with the Normal School teacher's training work.

But Mrs. Treble planned yet greater things for this new science. Whether or not it were exact to speak of her as the pioneer of this work in Canada, she certainly was one of its pioneers, and so far as Ontario is concerned became its leading exponent. She saw something splendid which might be done, and the vision brought its task. She wrote offering financial support to colleges and universities far beyond the bounds of this province if they would undertake the work, and, indeed, it has been established with more or less success in places as far distant as Japan.

But to trace the growth of the work in our midst. In 1902 the course of Household Science was inaugurated in the University, the work of teaching still being done in the Fred Victor Building. It was apparent this arrangement could not very well be made permanent. Mrs. Treble saw the need and the advisability of a larger and more suitable building somewhere in the group of buildings in Queen's Park. It was after consultation with Dr. Burwash, then Chancellor of Victoria, who through all the maturing of these plans was her counsellor and most efficient

advocate, that in 1904 a formal offer of a building was made to the University. The offer, being accepted by the Board, was fulfilled, doubly fulfilled, in the most generous fashion. On the corner of Avenue Road and Bloor Street stands to-day one of the most imposing, certainly the most richly finished and most thoroughly equipped building in the great group of University Buildings, a revelation to all who visit it. It was Mrs. Treble's belief that such a building would give to the study of Household Science the dignity and standing in the community it deserved. She believed also that education given in such an environment would be highly cultural and refining. That such education would meet practical needs was guaranteed by the character of the work itself. To-day Household Science is, what I do not suppose it is in any other University, one of the special courses leading to the B.A. degree. It is on the course for the training of teachers in the Faculty of Education, and about 150 young women in the University and in the Faculty of Education are availing themselves of the splendid privileges provided. Every year brings fresh jus-

tification of Mrs. Treble's faith in, and estimate of, this branch of practical science.

Mrs. Treble never, in all her works for these public services, forgot the Church. Many are the religious causes which have been helped by her generosity. She was largely instrumental in placing in this edifice the magnificent organ which leads the service of praise. The installation of the organ has led to a service ministering to high and reverent religious emotion. It has also been a large factor in making the Metropolitan a people's sanctuary attended by large congregations. Many a heart hungry and weary, unreached by sermon or prayer, is lifted, I doubt not, into the fellowship of God and comforted and made strong by the music of the great organ. Through years and centuries to come, will not this mighty instrument dedicated to Divine service console and inspire many weary and heavy-laden hearts, and tranquilize many disturbed and agitated in spirit.

This life service thus inadequately sketched has in it two striking characteristics. In the first place how natural its growth! Beginning in lowly things, it grew to great ministries. The thing done suggested something better.

As naturally as grow the vines blossoming into flower or ripening into fruit, as naturally as the boy grows to youth, and youth to manhood, so grew the ministry of this life. It grew in the warmth of Christian love and under the organizing power of a noble purpose. There is nothing erratic, nothing strange, nothing dramatic. It was a simple and sincere ministry of public good. The other characteristic is the personal effort invested in it all. That which was done was done as a self-expression. It was not the external persuasion of others imposing their ideas on one who possessed wealth and had nothing but money to give, but the interior persuasion of the worker's own mind and heart and strong, purposeful will. As such it involved far more than the giving of money. It meant the constant giving of energy and oversight, the careful and critical working out of plans, the patient overcoming of irritating and vexatious difficulties. It was work, real work, work that drew on brain and nerve and heart, work persisted in amid weariness and weakness and pain, work not laid down until the day was done.

Mrs Lillian Massey Treble might have lived quite a different sort of life. She might have narrowed her purpose to the accumulation and hoarding of wealth. She might have lived for selfish display. She might have played a large part in the shameless and ostentatious extravagance which characterizes so much modern living; or she might have lived to herself, drawing the silken curtains and declining so much even as to look out upon the world's need. She, too, like many others, might have been narrow and selfish and cynical of all charitable work, distrustful of all social efforts to uplift humanity. What a contrast such a life would have been with this noble life service, the memory of which will bless those who loved her and the ministry of which will reach far and wide and bless and cheer the generations of those who seek, not their own, but the common good.

